

Liberia PREDICT lab team visit

February 20-24 2017

Summary report

Participants: Jim Desmond, Jon Epstein, Simon Anthony, Tracey Goldstein, and Brian Bird

Summary of meetings, key points, and action items.

Meetings: Forest Development Authority (Government of Liberia wildlife authority); USAID mission; MoH (Deputy Minister Tolbert (PREDICT POC); MoH Ebola Operations Center weekly stakeholder meeting (MoH , MoA, CDC, WHO, USAID, P&R, NIH...); Phebe Hospital lab visit; Mike Miller (DoD Country Manager for Liberia); MoA lab; LIBR, National Reference Lab (at LIBR campus).

Key points

FDA meeting

- Met with Deputy Managing Director (POC for PREDICT) and senior staff.
- Presented first results report; requested review and clearance for public release; agreed to review and verbally agreed to release, but will provide written confirmation following further review.
- Discussed secondment of FDA officers to PREDICT: FDA will identify up to 4 officers who will train and rotate into PREDICT field activities. Agreed that PREDICT will not cover salary. Only per diem and allowable travel expenses. Formal arrangement will be developed between SCNL and FDA that states nature of relationship.
- Action Items:
 - SCNL to draft MOU with FDA
 - Jim to send Darlington HealthMap link to see public PREDICT info
 - Jim to follow up on data release and officer secondment (Note: FDA has cleared data for release)

USAID meeting

- Met with Tara Milani and Monica Dea (PREDICT/GHSA POC)
- Discussed and resolved major issues:
 - Jim's status - full time PREDICT (40+ hours/wk); available to mission as needed but within reason; will attend weekly EOC meetings to present updates for PREDICT or if in the field, will provide Monica with brief bullet points
 - Jerry's status: Jerry will not work on PREDICT
 - FDA: Will not pay salary to officers seconded - only per diem and allowable travel expenses
- Agreed to improved communication with mission and keep them more informed about activities. Tara asked for a more detailed workplan that includes partner details, sampling targets, government relationships & more detailed background info (e.g. Brian's updated scoping doc). We agreed to provide by the end of March.

- Mission asked for communication plan to government of Liberia ministries when reporting routine and sensitive results. We provided a hardcopy of the PREDICT communication strategy. They will also review and consider how to communicate internally (e.g. inform the Ambassador and Mission Director).
- Discussed hiring a Deputy Country Coordinator who will attend meetings when Jim is in the field.

USAID Mission Action items

Provide mission enhanced workplan by end of March.

Meeting with Deputy Minister Tolbert and Monica Dea

- Presented lab results & discussed review and clearance for release w/in 3 weeks
- Tolbert agreed to review report and come back with approval - (note: data cleared for release March 14).
- He pushed for in-country lab testing, but we explained high sample targets, need to export to CII for testing (with permission from FDA) and our intent to build lab capacity through training, but that that would take up to a year. He was OK with that.
- Mentioned field capacity already built.
- Discussed new Public Health Institute planned for 2019 under MoH to incorporate both LIBR and NRL. Tolbert said he would be the Director. PHI won't likely impact our work in the next 2 years.
- Jim will maintain communication with Tolbert via weekly EOC meetings and results reporting

MoH Action items

Jim to follow up on clearance from MoH to release lab results publicly. (Jim did and MOH provided approval on March 14th)

Lab meetings:

- None of the labs visited had capacity to run gel-based PCR.
- LIBR was the best lab in terms of infrastructure (physical space, cold chain, power, water) and we identified technicians both at LIBR and NRL who could be trained to run PREDICT protocols and who could have time to test PREDICT samples. The strategy for the next 8-12 months would be to set up the agreement with LIBR; bring in equipment for gel based PCR; CII could support technician training and QA/QC in country; start by processing domestic animal samples while still exporting wildlife samples

Action items

Jim to meet with Director of LIBR to discuss plan and mechanism for collaboration (e.g. MOU with EHA)

Other action items

Jim to meet with Dr. Zinnah, Minister of Agriculture and Ms. Wiles (Deputy Minister and PREDICT POC) to review lab report and discuss communication strategy

Jim to follow up with MoA lab scientists to include them in domestic animal sampling activities